

## **DEACON TEAM MINISTRY PLAN EXAMPLE LISTING**

**GOAL:** To create a structure enabling persons called to be deacons to “kick up the dust” in service of persons who make this their church home (families, friends and members of the community).

**STRATEGY:** To create small, challenged deacon ministry teams which take focused approaches toward effectively addressing some of the specific human and spiritual needs which are part of the lives of the church staff, members, visitors and friends.

**SECRET TO SUCCESS:** These teams are encouraged to solicit members of the church to help with the implementation of these ministries.

**NAME: CASSEROLE MINISTRY TEAM**

**FOCUS:** Persons affected by a time of crisis and/or upheaval of their normal schedule. This is a ministry of providing food for those dealing with other issues in their lives. Food is provided in several ways – home cooked, purchased, gift certificate, money given.

**MESSAGE:** “Let us provide your meals while you are dealing with crisis in your life.”

**SPIRITUAL GIFTS:** administration, encouragement, helps, hospitality, mercy

**NAME: HOSPITAL VISITATION TEAM**

**FOCUS:** Persons who are affected by hospitalization. This is a ministry of visitation for those in the hospital long or short-term.

**MESSAGE:** “You are not alone during this time of crisis and healing.”

**SPIRITUAL GIFTS:** administration, encouragement, faith, healing, helps, intercession, mercy

**NAME: BEREAVEMENT MINISTRY TEAM**

**FOCUS:** Persons affected by the death of a loved one. This is a ministry of visitation (home, funeral home, service, and graveside) and providing some needful items (gym bags with supplies, security and hosting personnel).

**MESSAGE:** “You are not alone in the shadow of your loss, we walk with you.”

**SPIRITUAL GIFTS:** administration, encouragement, faith, helps, intercession, mercy

### **OTHER POSSIBLE MINISTRY TEAMS**

**PRAYER, HOMEBOUND, CELEBRATION, NEW MEMBER, INACTIVE, SMALL JOBS, VISITOR OUTREACH, TRANSPORTATION, STAFF SUPPORT, DEACON MINISTRY OFFERING, EMERGENCY ALERT, SCHOOL CONNECTION (H.E.N.S. – HIS encouraging, nurturing, servants), TEACHING, HEALTH, ETC...**

**NOTE:** Details regarding other possible ministry teams are found in the DVD Resource entitled:  
**“SETTING DEACONS FREE”**

# HOW DO YOU DO WHAT YOU DO?

## DEACON = SERVANT

### HISTORY

- Early church – duties relating to charity, administration, education, worship
- A.D. 500 – 1500 – role became more ecclesiastical / candidates for priesthood
- 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> Century – patterns influenced by Baptists in England
- Latter half of 18<sup>th</sup> century – deacons as business managers – BOARD of DEACONS
- 1950's – shift from church management/administration towards ministering to needs of people (FAMILY MINISTRY APPROACH introduced)
- 1980's – ministry based on spiritual gifts and passion (TEAM MINISTRY APPROACH introduced)

### BOARD OF DEACONS

To manage the “affairs of the church” as it pertains to the financial solvency, pastoral oversight, administration of ordinances and matters of stewardship as it relates to the property and grounds and spiritual leaders.

#### PROS:

- Can release the pastor from administrative duties and responsibilities that get in the way of fulfilling pastoral role in ministry.
- Can incorporate the strengths of sound business practices by those accomplished in the business world
- Can be the supportive body of enabling the pastor's well-being as encouragers acting somewhat in the role of aiding pastor/church relationships
- Can model for church members dedicated disciplines of discipleship

#### CONS:

- Can strangle the pastor in micromanaging all decisions (day to day operations) by demanding Deacon approval on ALL actions
- Can become so business minded they do not incorporate the Biblical call for being spiritual leaders
- Can become the “voice” of many church members (usually one person, maybe two) on matters that are finicky and detrimental to the spirit of the pastor
- Can be “deacons” in name only – practices do not match calling

### FAMILY MINISTRY APPROACH

“It is a plan through which the deacons can join the pastor and church staff in ministering to the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of each church member and family. Resident church families are divided into groups and then assigned to a deacon who will minister to them over a period of time. Duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to the following: visitation (home, hospital, funeral home, nursing home, retirement facilities), witnessing to unsaved family members, celebrating good news with families, befriending members, answering questions regarding faith/church/denomination, providing fellowship between families, helping members to find ways to serve in the church, praying with and for members.” (The Deacon Family Ministry Plan resource book).

#### PROS:

- Plan sounds easy enough – “here are a number of families, care for them!”
- Helps a deacon become personally connected with church members as a trusted and helpful minister
- A method which ensures a personal touch for every church member so that no need goes unnoticed
- A process in which deacons become keenly aware of the variety of needs of church members
- Can be a means to supplement and enhance the ministries of the pastor and staff

## CONS:

- The plan sounds easy and attainable in method, but reality is that method is a set up for failure
- Not all deacons are multi-talented and gifted in order to meet the vast array of needs
- Requires heavy-duty on-going training for a smorgasbord of ministry needs
- Depends upon family members allowing the deacon to minister to them – communication of needs and follow-up. Some needs are confidential and some family members want ONLY pastoral ministry
- Depends upon the reality that a deacon must carve out time in their own life to meet needs
- Having a number of families assigned can possibly lead to numerous and overwhelming needs in each individual family unit
- Church members may build a very strong relationship with one deacon only to be assigned to another when “their” deacon rotates off active service
- Can be a morale buster amongst deacons and the church family due to some deacons doing a great job performing and others doing far less or nothing
- Training deacons to be all things to all people is exhaustive and never ending

## TEAM MINISTRY APPROACH

Deacons, who have discovered their spiritual gifts and passion, form and lead teams of laity to carry out a self-initiated job description for the purpose of meeting defined pastoral and ministry needs of the church. This may include teams that meet needs in the following (but not limited to) areas: casserole, homebound/hospital visitation, bereavement, prayer, celebration, new member assimilation, small jobs, inactive members, visitor outreach, transportation, staff support, emergency alert, health, teaching,

## PROS:

- Discovering and using the gifts and passion deacons and church members are divinely endowed with
- Does not require the deacon to be everything to everyone
- Focus – the team’s goal and job description are easy to define and attainable
- Shared responsibility allow for making sure no need falls in the cracks
- Laity involvement – builds skills and capitalizes on the gifts of all members as they work with deacons
- All members in need receive identical ministry – not based on popularity of person in need
- The team writes their own job description thereby inviting investment and energy at a deeper level
- Allows for ministry to be accomplished to more than just church members
- Strong Biblical basis – teams/spiritual gifts (ex: Acts 6:1-8, Eccl. 4:9-10, I Cor. 12:1, 7-11, 27-31)
- High morale across a wider base due to increased participation level of deacons and laity – reverses traditional reality that states “20% of people do 80% of work”
- T.E.A.M. – together everyone achieves more
- Method can be applied to any size deacon fellowship (number of teams correlates to leadership availability)

## CONS:

- Deacons who lead the teams must lead...if they do not lead, the ministry need goes unmet
- Not utilizing everyone on the team results in disinterest and lack of integrity
- Trying to initiate too many teams without appropriate leadership leads to immediate failure
- Lack of a clear and concise job description will lead to inconsistent ministry
- Lack of communication to church regarding ministry teams and how they function leads to confusion
- Lack of a plan to solicit help from the laity on a regular basis creates stagnation and low energy
- Lack of a clear and concise manner to communicate needs and who will respond
- Involvement of laity in ministry essentially allows for them to become “deacons in training”

## RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL TRAINING / LEARNING

### DEACONS: GENERAL

Chandler, Charles. *The Deacon Family Ministry Plan Resource Book*. Nashville: Convention Press, 1979.

Foshee, Howard B. *The Ministry of the Deacon*. Nashville: Convention Press, 1968

Howell, R.B.C. *The Deaconship*. Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1846.

Naylor, Robert E. *The Baptist Deacon*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1955.

Sheffield, Robert . *The Ministry of Baptist Deacons*. Nashville, Tennessee: Convention Press, 1955

Shurden, Walter. *The Doctrine of the Priesthood of Believers*. Nashville, Tennessee: Convention Press, 1987.

### FAMILY MINISTRY APPROACH

*The Deacon Family Ministry Planbook*. Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.  
Nashville, Tennessee: Convention Press, 1979.

### TEAM MINISTRY APPROACH

Bugbee, Bruce, Don Cousins & Bill Hybels . *Network, The Right People...In the Right Places...For the Right Reasons*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994.

Bugbee, Bruce. *What You Do Best in the Body of Christ*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1995.

Edge, Finley. *The Doctrine of the Laity*. Nashville, Tennessee: Convention Press, 1985.

Galloway, Dale. *Building Teams in Ministry*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2000.

Garner, Larry, John Temple & Keith Wilkinson. *Developing Deacon Ministry Teams*. Deacon Ministry Dynamics: Nelson Puckett, 1997.

Gilbert, Larry & Stan Toler. *The Pastor's Playbook – Coaching Your Team for Ministry*. Kansas, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 2000.

Temple, John. *Unleashing the Power of Deacon-led Ministry Teams*. Nashville, Tennessee: LifeWay Press, 2004.

Wagner, C. Peter. *Your Spiritual gifts can Help Your Church Grow*. Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1994.

### Comprehensive Instructional Program

[www.settingdeaconsfree.com](http://www.settingdeaconsfree.com)

### **Setting Deacons Free, 2012**

Includes the following:

Informative DVD – over two hours of instructional video segments to help you unlock the potential of your deacons using the team ministry approach

Master plan Workbook – step-by-step guide with helpful worksheets to help your team establish goals, objectives, and implementation timelines

Reference Materials – Sample team descriptions you can use to align your deacon fellowship with their God-given spiritual gifts and passions to guarantee their success

# **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

## ***What do we do about those who like having a deacon assigned to them?***

Upon implementing the Team approach, for the first two years we still assigned deacons a list of families. In the beginning of the year we would ask deacons to write a letter to their families providing their name, address and phone number along with this statement: "I look forward to serving you as your deacon. Should you have a need to arise that I may help with, please call and I will get the appropriate team involved to meet that need." We allowed deacons to have as much or as little contact with their families as they desired since the focus was no longer on personal contact but on teams meeting needs. After two years we simply stopped "cold turkey" assigning deacons a family list (there was no push-back since teams were successful in meeting the needs).

## ***What if we already have some committees or teams in place meeting some needs? Do we overlap those?***

My counsel has been to say, if the current team/committee is **FULLY** meeting the need, then there is no need to duplicate or overlap the teams. However, what I have discovered is that inevitably only the well known folks receive the ministry – not those who are less known or not as active in the church. The team approach implements full ministry regardless of who is in need.

## ***What are the most common concerns you hear from deacons who have implemented the team approach?***

**PARTICIPATION** – There are team leaders who make the mistake of using a couple of folks on the team rather than making sure that all members of the team have an opportunity to engage in serving. The team leader **MUST** engage ALL members in participation.

**LEADERSHIP** –What if there is not a deacon who rotates on the fellowship of deacons to replace the deacon who rotated off of a team...who leads the team? If you have a lay person who has a passion to do the ministry then let them do it...it is about getting the need met, NOT who is in charge. It has been my experience that God provides leaders to get ministry done.

**NUMBER OF TEAMS** – There is no perfect equation for determining the number of teams in conjunction with the number of active deacons you have. **HOWEVER**, the rule of thumb is to start with a small number of teams and create an atmosphere of success. You can always add teams later. If you start off with too many and fail then you have lost motivation. The number of teams also depends upon the job description of the teams. A labor intensive team will need more team members to sustain it as opposed to a less labor intensive job description. Remember the adage, "Do what you do well – become known for it! Do not try to be all things to all people."

## ***What if we only have a small number of active deacons?***

I have seen the team approach enjoy successful implementation in a church with four deacons. They started out with two teams, recruited laity and enjoyed tremendous success. They later added two more teams. Their testimony was; "We are doing more ministry than we ever have before."

## ***What about budgeting for the team approach?***

This is always a "wait and see how much you need" issue. The first year will be a guess because you will not know all the expenses to be incurred with the ministries being offered. After one year of implementation a basic budget will emerge. The budget is tied to the job description which would determine how much funding is needed to accomplish the ministry.

### *How do we solicit members of the church (laity) to join us in this ministry?*

The fact of the matter is you already have laity doing ministry. The key is to seek them out and invite them to join the team so that **together** you make sure that **EVERYONE** receives equal ministry in a time of need. Two methods found to be successful in soliciting help for the laity:

1. Announcements/advertisements/testimonies from the pulpit about the team needing help. Someone who can share a testimony of what it meant for someone to help them in a time of need certainly motivates others to get involved.
2. Ministry Fair – provide a fair in the fellowship hall, or gym, following a Sunday morning service and provide music, food, balloons and lots of energy! Have each team set up a booth/display that would entice people to come by and discover what their ministry is about and allow them to sign up. This is more than having people sit behind a table with a sign-up sheet! You must be creative. Examples:
  - Hospital Visitation Team – bring in a hospital bed and have a person in the bed acting as a patient. Make it as realistic as possible and it will draw attention like you cannot imagine. Have someone dressed up like a doctor with a clipboard to sign up those interested in being on the hospital visitation team. You could even offer a blood pressure check.
  - Small Jobs Ministry Team – set up a contest... who can hammer a nail into a board or saw a board in two the fastest. Hand out free paint stir sticks with your team logo/name on it.
  - Celebration Ministry Team – have a balloon to hand out to every person who stops by – find a reason to celebrate something in their life (birthday, anniversary, dressed nice, whatever) and sing Happy Birthday or some other song to them.

The whole purpose of the ministry fair is to draw attention to all the ministry opportunities and have FUN doing it.

### *What is a key component to keeping the team concept going?*

Publicity...publicity...publicity. Put a list of the teams in every Sunday school room, every new member's packet, in the pictorial directory of church members, on every bulletin board in the church and include it at least twice a year in the weekly or monthly mailing of a newsletter. You cannot publicize too much! This also serves the dual purpose of recruiting team members.

### *Do teams give reports at deacon's meetings?*

Depends on how "administrative" you want to be. We encouraged teams to report if they had something to report and celebrate. We kept deacon's meeting to ONE HOUR and no longer...therefore, we emphasized sticking to the important things. A key component of our meetings was to share ministry needs we heard about: "I heard Mr. Jones was going in for surgery next month." This kind of announcement served as an alert to the following teams: hospital visitation, prayer, casserole, small jobs. This allowed the teams to stay informed regarding up-coming needs.

### *What about training?*

Providing training depends on the team and the job description. Some teams require little to no training and others need one-time training. Examples:

- Hospital Visitation Team – do a one hour training on the "Do's and Don'ts" of a hospital visit (could invite a hospital chaplain to do this). The same would be true for homebound visits, nursing home visits, visits with new members or prospective members
- Bereavement Ministry Team – provide some guidelines as to the importance of "being there" as opposed to saying all the right things (ministry of "presence").